

## An online counseling intervention for Nigerian undergraduates with academic burnout

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### Abstract

A growing problem among university students is academic burnout, and it has become more prevalent in recent years. With the increasing demand for school mental health services, online counseling interventions are gradually being regarded as a reasonable way to provide assistance to students with regard to burnout reduction. It was the researcher's aim to find out whether an online counseling intervention would be able to reduce academic burnout in a Nigerian undergraduate sample. A total of 80 Nigerian undergraduates were participants of this study. In this study, the participants were randomly assigned to the intervention group (n=40) and to the control group (n=40) by using a simple randomization procedure. For the collection of data, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory for Students and the Students School Burnout Inventory were utilised. The researcher applied repeated measures ANOVA to examine within and between groups' mean differences, reported  $\eta^2$  to establish treatment effect size, and conducted posthoc analyses where mean differences existed using Holm's approach. The results of the study demonstrate that the online counseling intervention for academic burnout was effective in reducing the level of academic burnout among Nigerian undergraduates. As online counseling can help students reduce academic burnout, this finding opens the door to reach a larger number of burned-out students, such as those who live off-campus or are afraid of social stigma when seeking mental health care. This intervention has the potential to significantly improve student mental health related to burnout in other higher education settings like polytechnics. It is recommended that students should be encouraged to receive psychological supports and care from the university's counseling centre, not just during crises, but as a regular process of mental health support.

**Keywords:** Academic burnout, Online counseling, Telegram, Undergraduate students

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## Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that demonstrates how common academic burnout has become, with occurrence rates ranging from 7.2% to 70.6% (Al-Alawi et al., 2019; Almeida et al., 2016; Bakare et al., 2019; Boni et al., 2018; Loayza-Castro et al., 2016; Wickramasinghe et al., 2018). The term academic burnout has been used to describe the concept of burnout in the context of education. Schaufeli et al., (2002) defines academic burnout as being exhausted by excessive academic demands, resulting in negative attitudes and pessimistic outlooks towards academic tasks. A student experiencing academic burnout will exhibit a lack of enthusiasm for the course content, an inability to concentrate in class, a feeling of insignificance, an inability to participate in class events, and an unproductive attitude toward school work (Demerouti et al., 2010).

Nigerian undergraduates are crucial to achieving the objectives of university education, which includes producing skilled and competent graduates who are knowledgeable and capable of taking leadership positions (Ezeudu, Nwoji, et al., 2020). Nigerian undergraduate students are prepared to become informed and active citizens in Nigerian, African, and global contexts. Academic and extracurricular activities are part of undergraduate programs. Undergraduate students suffer from academic burnout in Nigeria. Olujide et al. (2017) reported that 68 percent of undergraduate students in their study have academic burnout. Obekpa et al. (2020) found a significant prevalence of burnout with 16.4%, 24.7 percent, and 20.8 percent, respectively, for emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased academic efficacy. Academic burnout was 15.8% among education undergraduate students on the emotional exhaustion subscale, 15.3% and 17.9% for law and medicine

students, respectively. In the subscale of cynicism, education undergraduates had the most burnout (35.6%), followed by medical undergraduates (20.4%), and law undergraduates with the least rate (16.7%). In the subscale of academic efficacy, medical students reported the highest burnout rate (30.4%), followed by students in education (24.3%) and law (5.1%) (Obekpa et al., 2020). Ayinde et al. (2021) reported 84.6% disengagement and 77.0% exhaustion rates among Nigerian medical students. Other research findings revealed that Nigerian students enrolled in various university education programs experiences academic burnout symptoms that can be alleviated through counseling interventions (Bakare et al., 2019; Ezeudu, Attah, et al., 2020; Ezeudu, Nwoji, et al., 2020; Ogbuanya et al., 2019).

As we live in a world that is increasingly relying on digital technologies, the counseling profession is changing and adopting available technological tools for distance counseling purposes (Kaplan et al., 2017). Thus, the counseling profession is experiencing a technological revolution similar to other professions, and with the development of new technologies, counselors are gaining access to an increasing number of opportunities to address their clients' diverse needs (Kaplan et al., 2017; Woo et al., 2020). As counseling interventions can be delivered either in-person or online, clients have the option to choose whether or not to use online counseling technology as part of the counseling process (American Counseling Association, 2014; Woo et al., 2020). Online-delivered intervention appears to be just as supportive as in-person-delivered intervention (Bettger et al., 2020; Josephine et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018; Langarizadeh et al., 2017; Navarro et al., 2019; Reynolds Jr et al., 2013; Richards & Richardson, 2012; Wagner et al., 2014). Online counseling is defined in multiple ways in the literature. This type of counseling is provided through a computer-based communication system by a professional counselor via several media such as e-mail, telegram, chat, or video systems. The definition of online counseling by Mallen and Vogel (2005) is that of offering mental and behavioral health services, including therapy, consultation and psycho-education, over the telephone, asynchronous email, synchronous chat, and videoconferencing, without the need for face-to-face meetings. Depending on the communication style, it can be either synchronous or asynchronous, and it can either take place alone or in conjunction with face-to-face counseling (Maheu et al., 2004; Woo et al., 2020). Clients' anonymity, zero transportation costs for participants and instructors, convenience and accessibility across physical locations, and disability are all advantages of online counseling interventions over face-to-face interventions (American Counseling Association, 2014; Andersson & Titov, 2014). In partnership with the counselor, the client starts electronic contact, picks choices, and sets the pace of interaction and outcomes, giving the client a sense of autonomy and empowerment. As a result, the client keeps a sense of ownership, as is typical of traditional face-to-face therapy (Andersson, 2018; Andersson et al., 2016; Mallen & Vogel, 2005; Mullin et al., 2015). In order to build and maintain an effective therapeutic relationship, it is important that the clients and counselor agree on the goals and activities to be accomplished and that they establish a trusting relationship.

When employing online counseling approach, counselors are required to possess knowledge and skills related to the technical, ethical, and legal aspects of using distance counseling, technologies and social media (American Counseling Association, 2014). The use of modern technologies in counseling enhances note-taking, information acquisition, and data storage for counselors (Conn et al., 2009). The use of mobile messaging applications like Telegram makes online counseling feasible, and this alternative allows clients to easily seek treatment without traveling to meet with a counselor. Thus, the telegram was used as the online counseling tool by the researcher for delivering the intervention in this study. This application supports instant messaging, sending large sized communication files, broadcast channels and groups, and boasts a higher connection speed, high user capacity, and suitability for any internet connected device (Chaple-Gil & Afrashtehfar, 2020). In order to provide a quality counseling service to the client, it is very important to actively engage them and cultivate an online relationship that maintains the client's interest and creates a positive experience (Evans, 2008). Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of online interventions and therapies in treating issues like depression, anxiety, and problematic substance use (Andersson et al., 2016; Josephine et al., 2017; Mayo-Wilson & Montgomery, 2013; Richards & Richardson, 2012). It is noteworthy that despite the fact that evidence about the effectiveness of online counseling intervention is growing, Dowling and Rickwood (2013) observed that the quality of the existing studies on this subject remains low. According to the researcher's evaluation of the past and current literature, research on the usefulness of online counseling intervention in reducing academic burnout among university students is limited. As a result, the goal of this study is to see how successful an online counseling intervention can be in reducing academic burnout among Nigerian undergraduate students. It was hypothesized that providing online counseling intervention to Nigerian undergraduate students will significantly reduce their academic burnout.

## Method

### Sample and sampling method

Study participants were undergraduate students at federal and state universities in Nigeria's southeast region. Eighty participants (age range: 20-26 years old) were chosen using simple random sampling. The

researcher surveyed a total of 468 undergraduate students to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study. There were 245 students (52.35%) who met the requirement for a high level of burnout. Participants were also required to not have been involved in any other burnout intervention program during the study period, and not have a current or past mental illness. With a power of 80%, the researcher estimated an acceptable sample size of 28 using 3.1 version of GPower (Faul et al., 2007) with an effect size of 0.25 at 0.05 probability level. In this study, the participants were randomly assigned to the intervention group (n=40) and to the control group (n=40) by using a simple randomization procedure (computer generated random numbers) within Random Allocation Software (Saghaei, 2004).

### **Instrumentation**

Academic burnout was assessed with the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory for Students (OLBI-S) (Reis et al., 2015) which has 16 items designed to measure exhaustion (owing to the demands of studying) and disengagement (an attitude of detachment from academic studies), each with eight questions. Student burnout is determined by the sum of the two subscales. In this study, Cronbach's alpha values for exhaustion and disengagement were 0.83 and 0.87, respectively.

Academic burnout was also measured with the Students School Burnout Inventory (Khani et al., 2018). This questionnaire consists of 16 items scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 6. The lowest score on this instrument is 16 and the highest score is 96. Four dimensions of academic burnout are measured by this self-report questionnaire: pessimism toward the school (4 items), burnout from school (5 items), assignments, feeling of inadequacy in school (4 items), and burnout from problems which school develops (3 items). In terms of internal consistency, the subscales had Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.73, 0.79, 0.74, and 0.71 for pessimism toward the school, burnout from school, assignments, feeling of inadequacy in school, and burnout from problems which school develops, respectively.

### **Procedure**

Participants were notified about the study's kick-off date and invited through an e-mail link to a Telegram group. The consent forms specifically asked the students for their agreement to engage in an online telegram counseling intervention. These students were told about the intervention's specifics as well as the confidentiality with which their personal information will be handled. Thereafter, an eight weeks online counseling intervention was held. The OLBI-S and students school burnout inventory were administered after the last session of the 8th week to collect post-test data. One month later, follow-up sessions were held. This went on for two weeks and the researcher collected follow-up data at the end. Two professionally trained counselors assisted the researcher in the delivery and monitoring of the online counseling intervention.

An integrative counseling approach integrating cognitive, emotive, behavioral and psycho-educational techniques was used for this online intervention. The online counseling intervention provided students with a brief consultation of sixteen sessions. Students were assisted in identifying the main factors that contribute to their burnout and how to best address those factors based on a counseling framework by Ogbuanya et al. (2019). The researcher sought to create a safe online relationship environment by establishing a therapeutic alliance with the students. This online counseling intervention provides students with an opportunity to reflect on and dispute their burnout beliefs that underlie their rationale for partaking in the intervention. It also provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their perspectives about general mental and emotional health at school. Students were asked to describe and analyze their thoughts and identify presumed factors that contributed to their academic burnout. The intervention also aimed at identifying, acknowledging, and challenging coping strategies related to students' burnout. The counselor proactively evaluated and addressed the students' short and long-term needs pertaining to academic burnout prevention using online counselling skills and techniques recommended by Evans, (2008). The online counseling sessions took place for a period of 60 minutes. For the purpose of comparison, the treatment-as-usual approach was used for the students in the control group.

### **Analysis Plan**

Mean and standard deviation scores of students' academic burnout were reported for both the treatment and control groups. The researcher applied repeated measures ANOVA to examine within and between groups' mean differences, reported  $\eta^2$  to establish treatment effect size, and conducted posthoc analyses where mean differences existed using Holm's approach. All statistical analyses were evaluated at 0.05 level of significance and the statistical program used to perform the analyses was JASP 0.16.1.0.

### **Research Design and Ethics Statement**

In this study, a randomized controlled trial design was utilized and it was approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Nigeria. Individual participants provided informed

consent prior to participating in the study. Experimental procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association

## Results

**Table 1:** Mean scores and standard deviations of academic burnout as measured by Oldenburg Burnout Inventory for students (OLBI-S).

	Intervention	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std Error of Mean
Pretest	Experimental Group	40	78.17	3.32	.526
	Control Group	40	78.48	3.26	.516
Posttest	Experimental Group	40	51.05	2.75	.436
	Control Group	40	67.75	4.89	.774
Follow-Up	Experimental Group	40	45.45	5.20	.823
	Control Group	40	62.10	4.31	.682

Table 1 shows the pre-test, posttest and follow-up academic burnout scores with associated standard deviations scores of undergraduate students exposed to online counseling and those who were not exposed to online counseling. The pretest scores indicated that there is similarity in academic burnout scores of experimental ( $M = 78.17$ ,  $SD = 3.32$ ) and control groups ( $M = 78.48$ ,  $SD = 3.26$ ). The post-test scores indicated that there was a significant difference in academic burnout scores of experimental ( $M = 51.05$ ,  $SD = 2.75$ ) and control groups ( $M = 67.75$ ,  $SD = 4.89$ ) signifying a reduction in undergraduate students' academic burnout scores of experimental groups compared to control group as measured by OLBI-S. There was also a continuous reduction in undergraduate students' academic burnout scores at follow-up for the experimental group ( $M = 45.45$ ,  $SD = 5.20$ ) compared to the control group ( $M = 62.10$ ,  $SD = 4.31$ ) with experimental group maintaining lower score of academic burnouts as measured by OLBI-S.

**Table 2:** Mean scores and standard deviations of academic burnout as measured by students' school burnout inventory.

	Intervention	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std Error of Mean
Pretest	Experimental Group	40	84.80	3.48	.551
	Control Group	40	83.60	3.45	.546
Posttest	Experimental Group	40	54.50	2.26	.358
	Control Group	40	74.55	5.82	.921
Follow-Up	Experimental Group	40	43.03	7.89	1.249
	Control Group	40	67.95	4.80	.760

Table 2 shows the pre-test, posttest, and follow-up academic burnout scores with associated standard deviations scores of undergraduate students exposed to online counseling and those who were not exposed to online counseling. The pretest scores indicated that there is similarity in academic burnout scores in experimental ( $M = 84.80$ ,  $SD = 3.48$ ) and control groups ( $M = 83.60$ ,  $SD = 3.45$ ). The post-test means scores indicated that there was a difference in academic burnout scores of experimental ( $M = 54.50$ ,  $SD = 2.26$ ) and control groups ( $M = 74.55$ ,  $SD = 5.82$ ) signifying that there was a more decline in undergraduate students' academic burnout scores of experimental group compared to control group as measured by students' school burnout inventory. There was also a continuous decline in undergraduate students' academic burnout scores at follow-up for experimental group ( $M = 43.03$ ,  $SD = 7.89$ ) when compared to control group ( $M = 67.95$ ,  $SD = 4.80$ ) with experimental group maintaining lower scores of academic burnouts as measured by students' school burnout inventory.

**Table 3:** Repeated measures ANOVA of effect of online counseling on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured by OLBI-S.

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	$\eta^2$
Group	7548.817	1	7548.817	374.595	< .001	0.182
Time	26466.633	2	13233.317	<sup>a</sup> 901.956	<sup>a</sup> < .001	<sup>a</sup> 0.638
Time * Group	3575.233	2	1787.617	<sup>a</sup> 121.840	<sup>a</sup> < .001	<sup>a</sup> 0.086

In Table 3, repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of online counseling intervention on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured by OLBI-S. The result showed that there was a significant effect of intervention on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured with OLBI-S,  $F(1, 79)=374.595$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.182$ . The result equally revealed that there is statistically effect of time on undergraduate students' academic burnout,  $F(2, 78) =901.956$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.638$ . Furthermore, the result showed that there was statistically significant interaction effect of time and group,  $F(2, 112) = 121.840$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.086$ . Since there are significance differences in academic burnout mean scores with respect to time, and interaction between time and intervention, the researcher conducted Holm's post hoc analysis by Time to depict where the differences exist.

**Table 4:** Post Hoc Comparisons - Times

		Mean Difference	SE	t	p <sub>Holm</sub>
Pretest	Posttest	18.925	0.606	31.248	< .001
	Follow-Up	24.550	0.606	40.536	< .001
Posttest	Follow-Up	5.625	0.606	9.288	< .001

The data in Table 4 shows the Holm's post hoc comparison of mean scores of academic burn out of undergraduate students based on time. The data showed that students had significantly lower scores of academic burnout at posttest (*Mean difference*= 18.925, standard error= 0.606,  $p=.001$ ). Furthermore, undergraduate students showed a consistent and significant decline in academic burnout scores at follow-up (*Mean difference*= 5.625, standard error= 0.606,  $p=.001$ ).

**Table 5:** Post Hoc Comparisons - Time\*Group

		Mean Difference	SE	t	p <sub>Holm</sub>
Experimental Group, Pretest	Control Group, Pretest	-0.300	0.908	-0.330	0.741
	Experimental Group, Posttest	27.125	0.856	31.670	< .001
	Control Group, Posttest	10.425	0.908	11.478	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	32.725	0.856	38.208	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	16.075	0.908	17.699	< .001
Control Group, Pretest	Experimental Group, Posttest	27.425	0.908	30.195	< .001
	Control Group, Posttest	10.725	0.856	12.522	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	33.025	0.908	36.361	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	16.375	0.856	19.119	< .001
Experimental Group, Posttest	Control, Group, Posttest	-16.700	0.908	-18.387	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	5.600	0.856	6.538	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	-11.050	0.908	-12.166	< .001
Control Group, Posttest	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	22.300	0.908	24.553	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	5.650	0.856	6.597	< .001
Experimental Group, Follow-Up	Control Group, Follow-Up	-16.650	0.908	-18.332	< .001

In Table 5, Holm's post hoc analysis was conducted for intervention x time interaction. The data shows that at time 1, undergraduate students in intervention and control groups had almost same mean score (*Mean difference*=-0.300, standard error= 0.908,  $p=0.741$ ). Moreover, undergraduate students in the intervention group had significantly lower academic burnout score at posttest when compared with the control group at time 2 (*Mean difference*=-16.700, standard error=0.908,  $p<.001$ ) indicating that academic burnout scores of undergraduate students exposed to online counseling significantly dropped compared to control group as measured by OLBI-S. Undergraduate students exposed to online counseling maintained significantly lower academic burnout scores compared to control group at follow-up as measured by OLBI-S (*Mean difference*=-16.650, standard error=0.908,  $p<.001$ ).

**Table 6:** Repeated measures ANOVA of effect of online counseling on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured by students' school burnout inventory.

Cases	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p	$\eta^2$
Group	12775.004	1	12775.004	455.807	< .001	0.210
Time	34485.058	<sup>a</sup> 2 <sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup> 17242.529	<sup>a</sup> 744.972	<sup>a</sup> < .001	<sup>a</sup> 0.567
Time * Group	7718.958	<sup>a</sup> 2 <sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup> 3859.479	<sup>a</sup> 166.751	<sup>a</sup> < .001	<sup>a</sup> 0.127

In Table 6, repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of online counseling intervention on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured by students' school burnout inventory. The result showed that there was a significant effect of intervention on undergraduate students' academic burnout as measured with students' school burnout inventory,  $F(1, 79) = 455.807$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.210$ . The result equally revealed that there is statistically effect of time on undergraduate students' academic burnout,  $F(2, 78) = 744.972$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.567$ . Furthermore, the result showed that there was statistically significant interaction effect of time and group,  $F(2, 112) = 166.751$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.127$ . Since there are significance differences in academic burnout scores with respect to time, and interaction between time and intervention, the researcher conducted Holm's post hoc analysis by Time to depict where the differences exist.

**Table 7:** Post Hoc Comparisons – Times

		Mean Difference	SE	t	$p_{\text{holm}}$
Pretest	Posttest	19.675	0.761	25.865	< .001
	Follow-Up	28.713	0.761	37.746	< .001
Posttest	Follow-Up	9.038	0.761	11.881	< .001

The data in Table 7 shows the Holm post-hoc comparisons of academic burnout scores of undergraduate students based on time as measured by students' school burnout inventory. The data showed that students had significant lower mean score of academic burnout at posttest (*Mean difference*= 19.675, standard error= 0.761,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, undergraduate students had a consistent and significant decline in academic burnout score at follow-up (*Mean difference*= 9.038, standard error= 0.761,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 8:** Post Hoc Comparisons - Intervention \* Times

		Mean Difference	SE	T	$p_{\text{holm}}$
Experimental Group, Pretest	Control Group, Pretest	1.200	1.113	1.078	0.282
	Experimental Group, Posttest	30.300	1.076	28.166	< .001
	Control Group, Posttest	10.250	1.113	9.210	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	41.775	1.076	38.833	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	16.850	1.113	15.140	< .001
Control Group, Pretest	Experimental Group, Posttest	29.100	1.113	26.147	< .001
	Control Group, Posttest	9.050	1.076	8.413	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	40.575	1.113	36.458	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	15.650	1.076	14.548	< .001
Experimental Group, Posttest	Control Group, Posttest	-20.050	1.113	-18.015	< .001
	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	11.475	1.076	10.667	< .001
	Control, Group, Follow-Up	-13.450	1.113	-12.085	< .001
Control Group, Posttest	Experimental Group, Follow-Up	31.525	1.113	28.326	< .001
	Control Group, Follow-Up	6.600	1.076	6.135	< .001
Experimental Group, Follow-Up	Control Group, Follow-Up	-24.925	1.113	-22.396	< .001

Table 8 shows that Holm's post hoc analysis was conducted for intervention x time interaction. The data shows that at time 1, undergraduate students in intervention and control group had almost same mean score (*Mean difference*=1.200, standard error=1.113,  $p=0.282$ ). Moreover, undergraduate students in the intervention group had significant lower academic burnout score at posttest when compared with the control group at time 2 (*Mean difference*=-20.050, standard error=1.113,  $p<.001$ ) indicating that academic burnout scores of undergraduate students exposed to online counseling intervention significantly dropped compared to control group as measured by students' school burnout inventory. Undergraduate students exposed to online counseling maintained a significantly lower academic burnout scores compared to control group at follow-up (*Mean difference*=-24.925, standard error=1.113,  $p<.001$ ) as measured by students' school burnout inventory.

## Discussion

The study examined the effect of online counseling on academic burnout among Nigerian undergraduates. The researcher found that academic burnout among Nigerian undergraduates was significantly reduced by online counseling intervention. Analysis of the follow-up data indicates that participants who received the online counseling intervention sustained this positive outcome compared to participants who did not receive it. According to these results, this intervention study is much like other intervention studies that have applied digital technologies to deliver burnout interventions and at the end have reported a significant reduction in burnout as a result of the intervention (e.g. Igbokwe et al., 2019; Iremeka et al., 2021; Ofoegbu et al., 2020). These results add to the growing number of studies showing that online/web-based interventions reduces psychological stress symptoms (Ebert, Heber, et al., 2016; Ebert, Lehr, et al., 2016; Heber et al., 2017; Ierardi et al., 2022). Zeren et al. (2020) indicate that online counseling intervention is beneficial for improving students' psychological wellbeing and health. Mullin et al. (2015) discovered that compared to the control group, an online wellness counseling program reduced anxiety symptoms following treatment and at three months after treatment. Dugdale et al.'s (2019) study suggests that online counseling can be helpful for people experiencing psychological discomfort. Backhaus et al. (2012) reported high levels of satisfaction from patients following an online counseling intervention. Berryhill et al. (2019) found that online counseling intervention can be useful in reducing psychological concern. Online counseling enhances the motivation of counselees to attend appointments by allowing them to communicate with their counselor in real time (Evans, 2008). Using an online self-help intervention, Charbonnier et al. (2022) found an improvement in participants' mental health outcomes.

In this study, which addressed the effect of online counseling interventions on students' academic burnout, the research addressed a knowledge and context gap in online counseling. The study's finding offer insightful guidance to school counselors on how to reduce students' burnout in order to improve effective learning behavior. In the counseling profession, specialists recognize that one's ability to consult with one's clients no longer needs to be limited to in-person, face-to-face interactions. As a result, counselors are constantly evolving and adapting their work to be in tune with the changes occurring in their field, including distance and online counseling technology, and as well as how to use these tools to better assist clients. There are additional difficulties that may come with the use of online counseling, and counselors are always aware of these and take every measure to preserve clients' confidentiality in addition to upholding all legal and ethical requirements (American Counseling Association, 2014). It is important for counselors using online counseling technology in their counseling practice to be aware of the laws and regulations of both the counselor's and the client's locations; ensure their clients are properly informed about relevant legal rights and restrictions applicable to the use of online counseling technology, or social media counseling across state and international boundaries; it is also imperative for counselors to take reasonable actions to ensure the privacy of information and records transmitted electronically. However, counselors should acknowledge the limits of maintaining the privacy of such information and should inform the client of these limits (American Counseling Association, 2014). The researcher believes that providing online counseling can benefit and reinforce students' mental health throughout their university education. Still, there are some issues with the current work. Its sample was restricted to Nigerian undergraduate students. The study results may not apply to college students and postgraduates. The study only included undergraduate students in Southeast Nigeria. In the future, it is necessary to address these limitations so that the quality of evidence and the generalizability of results can be improved.

## Conclusion

This report presents empirical data on the effects of an online counseling intervention on school burnout reduction in Nigerian university students. The academic burnout in a sample of Nigerian undergraduate students was reduced through this online counseling intervention. As online counseling can help students reduce academic burnout, this finding opens the door to reach a larger number of burned-out students, such as those who live off-campus or are afraid of social stigma when seeking mental health care. This intervention has the potential to significantly improve student mental health related to burnout in other higher education

settings like polytechnics. It is recommended that students should be encouraged to receive psychological supports and care from the university's counseling centre, not just during crises, but as a regular process of mental health support. Students who are struggling with academic burnout may be assisted by counselors by creating an appropriate climate for diversity and through an integrative online counseling program.

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